

MONROE, LA.
NEWS-STAR

E - 15,121

JUL 15 1971

CIA Was Right

One fact emerging from the Pentagon Papers has not received proper attention. Richard Helms, head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) would assuredly agree.

The fact was discovered by the Christian Science Monitor in its perusal of the papers, particularly the chapter dealing with policy - making between 1962 through 1964. It is simply this: that the CIA and a little-known section of the State Department called the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) were accurate sources of intelligence and information, and the defense establishment was invariably wrong.

For example, in 1962 the policy makers of Washington were cheerily doing their planning on the assumption that Viet Cong insurgency would be overcome by the end of the year 1965. By the end of 1965, however, American escalation was mounted and on its way to putting 500,000 men into Vietnam.

The Monitor reports: "Over and over through these papers both CIA and INR seem to get their facts and estimates in balance and perspective whereas Department of Defense Intelligence and Military Aid Group appraisals leave much to be desired.

"... The policymakers were working all through 1962 and 1963 on information and judgments which were totally discredited by

events. Clearly, CIA and INR were working in the right direction and the lesson, if any, is that policy makers should listen more to these sources and less to the others."

The CIA works clandestinely and not often does the public learn of its activities. Unless, of course, there is a snafu of some sort and the super-secret agency gets the blame. This has happened on more than one occasion. So, it is good to hear that the agency that keeps tabs on international doings showed considerable expertise in the Vietnam theater of operations.

A search for villains and scapegoats is not a recommended course of action in the wake of the flood of top secret data reaching public print. However, it would be an interesting follow-up to determine why military intelligence was inferior to civilian in '62-65, what factors led one group to assess the situation one way, another group another way.

It is recalled that when two advisers of the late President Kennedy returned from Vietnam and gave him conflicting assessments, he asked them, "are you sure you went to the same country?" The Pentagon Papers reveal that the professional military intelligence services were no less confused than were one-shot emissaries. What a pity that their miscalculations were so grievous in terms of men and material.